



September — October 2005

Washington starts program to aid evacuees

A few days after the onslaught of Hurricane Katrina it became clear that Washington State would be playing more than a supporting role to a regional emergency.

The State Emergency Operations Center activated to a Phase II within hours of the hurricane's landfall, just east of New Orleans. Using the experience of 2003 and 2004, the state EOC was expected to be primarily a coordination point for Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) requests for emergency management personnel.

But the mission changed significantly when the Federal Emergency Management Agency sent a priority message late on Sept. 2 to all states asking whether they could accept evacuees on short notice from the hurricane zone that encompassed most of three Gulf Coast states -- Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi.

Emergency Management Division (EMD) officials assembled early on Saturday, Sept. 3, to prepare Washington State's response to the FEMA query. Working closely with the office of Gov. Christine Gregoire, EMD planners turned to the state's Repatriation Plan, as a



Hurricane Rita left nearly total destruction in Cameron Parish of southwest Louisiana when the storm struck Texas and Louisiana on Sept. 23. Rita was the second devastating hurricane to hit the U.S. Gulf Coast in 2005. The hurricane caused an estimated \$8 billion to \$11 billion in damage and killed 119 persons in Florida, Texas and Louisiana. (EMD Photo by Fred Klauss)

Klauss works in SW Louisiana area

For Fred Klauss, the highlight of a two-week Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) deployment to Louisiana was a one-day support mission to the southwestern Louisiana's Cameron Parish.

Klauss, the Emergency Management Division's Tri-Cities program manager, said he drove with Jim Walkowski, Bainbridge Island Fire Department chief, and Dan Smith, of North Kitsap Fire District, to Cameron from their Baton Rouge base after little had been heard from the parish of 10,000 following the onslaught of Hurricane Rita.

Their worst fears were confirmed when they entered the parish's main town to find "everything was totally wiped out, except for the courthouse," said Klauss. "Nothing was left."

Klauss said the three found the parish's part-time emergency manager at makeshift command post at a roadside rest stop and quickly pitched in to help organize the parish's emergency response.

"The whole thing wasn't organized," said Klauss. His team members went to work to set up charts for organizing emergency resources so that the parish could make requests for state and federal aid.

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Gov. Christine Gregoire talks about Operation Evergreen in a Camp Murray news conference Sept. 6. Appearing with the governor were (l-r) Ron Sims, King County executive; Jim Mullen, Washington Emergency Management director, Peter Antolin (standing behind the governor), Governor's representative to Operation Evergreen; Steve Bailey, Pierce County Emergency Management director; Brig. Gen. Gordon Toney, commander, Washington Army National Guard; and Washington State Patrol Chief John R. Batiste. (EMD Photo)

Operation Evergreen aids evacuees

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starting point.

However, the Repatriation Plan, which was designed to quickly resettle overseas U.S. citizens who were evacuating from a foreign emergency or disaster, had limitations for the Katrina disaster. The number of Katrina evacuees was estimated in the hundreds of thousands and recovery might have to be extended to them for weeks or months.

EMD officials also saw that local jurisdictions, especially King, and Pierce counties, would have to play vital roles in an extended support operation for Katrina evacuees – which soon took the title of Opera-

tion Evergreen.

By the afternoon of Monday, Sept. 5, the state Emergency Operations Center was activated to a Phase III as the state responded to FEMA that Washington could accept as many as 1,500 evacuees from the hurricane zone.

Gov. Gregoire declared a state of emergency Sept. 4 to mobilize state resources for the possible reception of evacuees. President Bush added Washington Sept. 7 to the Katrina disaster declaration, making Washington State eligible for public assistance grants for emergency worker costs to assist Katrina evacuees.

With the continuing expecta-

tion of evacuee airlifts, Operation Evergreen continued to work to establish a state reception center in Tumwater with help from Thurston County.

Meanwhile, the EMD hotline to assist evacuees with disaster registration issues received as many as 35 to 40 calls a day between Sept. 5 and 13. The American Red Cross and the Department of Social and Health Services also reported a rising number of persons from the Gulf Coast who had registered for assistance in the first weeks of September

On Sept. 14, Operation Evergreen opened the Tumwater center and assisted about 100 persons in eight days of operation. FEMA officially notified the state on Sept. 23 that it would not receive any airlift of Katrina evacuees.

But the number of evacuees from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, whose FEMA registrations listed Washington State addresses, continued to climb.

By late October, FEMA reported Washington had 1,793 Katrina and Rita registrations, representing between 4,482 and 5,379 individual evacuees since registration typically involves family groups of two or three persons.

Hurricane evacuees are reported in 35 of 39 Washington counties. King County has the largest number of evacuee registrations with 776, followed by Pierce County, 303; Snohomish County, 143; Kitsap County, 86; and Clark County, 83; and Spokane County, 79.

Jackson sent to Louisiana EOC

The following article was written by Scott Jackson, EMD CSEPP trainer.

I was a member of a nine-person Liaison Officer (LNO) team in support of the State of Louisiana in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. The state had requested the ICS trained team to augment their current staff and provide liaison between their Emergency Operations Center and the Joint Field Office (JFO) during response and recovery operations.

When we arrived, there was already an Incident Management Team Type I on scene and assisting the State EOC. ... After several discussions with the State Operations Officer, Bill Doran, we were tasked to perform our initial liaison mission and provide assistance to his staff.

The JFO was located in an abandoned Macy's department store, approximately 15 miles away from the State EOC. The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) plan was to co-locate the JFO and the State Operations section immediately following the landfall of Hurricane Katrina. Its intent was to improve communication, increase coordination, and reduce duplication of effort between both Agencies. For various reasons, this did not happen, and Hurricane Rita definitely put a delay on this plan.

This gap in the plan is where



A Seattle television crew films as state Department of Licensing staff assist a Hurricane Katrina evacuee who is seeking to re-establish personal identification and a driver's license. DOL was one of several state and non-profit agencies that aided hurricane evacuees at the Operation Evergreen assistance center in Tumwater. (State Department of General Administration photo)

... (our team) found our niche and began our efforts to improve communication and coordination between the JFO and State EOC.

State EOC:

While in the EOC, I helped to develop a system to process the E-team resource requests which were piling up. The E-team system was used as a resource ordering system. It prioritized resources by urgency. When we arrived, they had over 350 high priority requests that were not being acted upon or not updated correctly....The processing of these E-team requests and the Action Request Forms (JFO) was our main function as LNOs. Adding to the challenge was that the State EOC and the JFO utilized different systems to

process requests for resources and equipment. This proved cumbersome for both agencies in processing the requests.

Communication: All communication after Hurricane Katrina was out of order for various reasons. This includes 450 & 800-Mhz radios, telephonic, email, and cell phones. Luckily, FEMA arrived with a vast load of satellite phones which served to provide the only communication network days after Hurricane Katrina. Our ability to have a small quantity of satellite phones on hand (distributed statewide) will only help our response efforts.

E-team: The State Operations section's main function during response and recovery was the



Damage from Hurricane Katrina's winds and storm surge flooding was widespread in several New Orleans neighborhoods. Insurances loss estimates from Katrina range from \$34 billion to \$60 billion, making it the costliest disaster in U.S. history. More than 1,200 fatalities were blamed on the storm. (EMD Photo by Scott Jackson)

Jackson sent to Louisiana EOC

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processing of logistics to aid in life sustaining and life safety operations. A sound, concise, functional, and user-friendly logistics system must be in place prior to a disaster of this magnitude. As noted above, a logistical supply ordering and tracking system needs to be developed to better equip State emergency managers and FEMA working together to solve logistical issues.

ICS: Use of ICS in EOC operations would alleviate duplication of efforts, provide accountability, improve communications, and improve overall direction and control. Including

State Agencies (DSS, DOTD, DHH, State Police, etc.) in the ICS structure under the Operations Section Chief or Deputy Ops Section Chief would help in maintaining an effective span of control and improve communication and coordination. Incorporating this manageable span of control will allow the Operations Officer to delegate responsibility, signature authority, and reduce the need to have all the information in the EOC flow through him....

Joint Field Office: The JFO was enormous in size and structure. There were over 1,000 personnel working at the JFO. A good relationship with FEMA

prior to a disaster would only help our organization. Recommend inviting FEMA Region 10 representatives to upcoming training and exercises to aid in coordination and team-building.

Evacuation Plans: The State of Louisiana had an evacuation plan in place that has been used effectively in the past. Their plan is a phased evacuation operation from lower parishes in the state to northern parishes. Their plan did call for sheltering at the Superdome. However, they did not plan on ... the large quantity of evacuees (arriving all) at once after the levees breached, and they did not plan on the quantity of special populations and poverty-stricken people not having means to leave the city.

Home Rule State: It was a personal eye-opener for me to observe the power the Parish Presidents had in their own Parish. Under Louisiana law, the Parish President had the authority to govern their Parish without aid or assistance from the State or its Governor. ...

(For Washington State) open dialogue, inclusion in the development and review of emergency plans and preparedness, and inclusion in training and exercises with all counties could ... enhance our goal for the state and counties to work together to provide life sustenance and life safety for our citizens

Six jurisdictions receive grants

A total of \$4 million in 2005 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program grant awards will be divided this fall among six Washington State jurisdictions, according to FEMA.

The grants assist states, local governments and Indian Tribal governments in implementing cost-effective hazard mitigation activities that complement a comprehensive mitigation program. The Washington state projects were selected from 785 grant applications totaling \$506 million, according to FEMA.

The grant awards were:

- Edmonds School District, a \$3 million grant towards a \$5.2 million project to seismically retrofit and provide safe egress for nine schools. The school district must provide the remaining \$2.2 million.
- City of Westport, \$30,000 planning grant,
- Whitman County, a \$111,728 planning grant
- Grant County, a \$4,459 planning grant
- Pierce County, a \$377,619 planning grant.
- Washington State University, a \$493,125 planning grant.

FEMA's award represents 75 percent of the planning costs. Sub-grant recipients pay the remaining 25 percent.



Steve Sautter, Benton County public information officer, prepares media information as part of his Emergency Management Assistance Compact deployment to Hancock County, located on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The county's Emergency Operations Center was in the county's Vo-Tech High School. (Federal Emergency Management Photo by Jesse Seigal)

Sautter deployed to Mississippi

The following story was written by Steve Sautter, public information officer for Benton County.

On Monday, Sept. 19, I received notification via e-mail that the Washington Emergency Management Division (EMD) was seeking a group of three public information officers (PIO) to deploy to Hancock County Mississippi under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). I responded and was on-the-ground in Hancock County MS with three other PIOs from the Seattle area on Sept. 21.

We flew into Gulfport MS and then traveled by car to Hancock County which was about 25 miles to the west of Gulfport. We operated out of the Hancock County Emergency Operations Center which was housed in the Hancock County Vo-Tech High School.

Although we had numerous contacts with the media, our primary focus was on getting information to the general public by publishing a daily recovery update and sheet of FAQs (frequently asked questions). We had approximately 20 places within the county that the information was posted – on bulletin boards and other structures. Several response centers also handed out hard copies to individuals who were using their services.

The only radio station in the county was run out of our offices. It was maintained by a volunteer. We were able to get numerous individuals from the relief/recovery effort to do interviews during the day.

As Lead PIO, I attended a daily briefing led by the FEMA Incident

Sautter deployed to Mississippi

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Commander each day at 8 a.m. at the Hancock County Federal Coordination Center at the EOC. I attended this meeting as guest although I worked with the FEMA PIOs to help implement communication assignments.

The Hancock County director of emergency management was in charge of the EOC where 17 Emergency Support Functions (ESF) were represented at the EOC. Each day at 6 p.m. (except Sunday), the director conducted a meeting to review the day's activities and to strategize for the next day. These daily meetings provided the PIOs with much of the information needed for our daily updates. They also allowed direct access to a number of officials who were difficult to catch at any other time.

We also worked closely with many groups within the county including the Chamber of Commerce and school districts. We assisted these groups in getting information to the public and the media relating to activities within the county.

Another focus was to get more attention from the national media for Hancock County. We succeeded in getting a number of National Public Radio reporters and producers coming in from Washington, DC. NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams was broadcast from Waveland one night.

Here are some of "my" lessons learned during the deployment:

- You must get accurate and timely information to residents.
- Officials need to know what local, state and federal assistance is and is not available to individual residents and local government agencies.
- There should be a single clearinghouse for relief supplies.
- Local, state, and federal agencies need to be in step with each other and know what the other is doing.
- Must be a distinct chain of command.
- Local government must know what resources are and are not available.
- Community leaders must be visible in the community.
- You must be willing to step out of your comfort zone to get the job done.
- You must document your actions.
- You must know how the federal programs are handled.

This was truly an experience I will never forget. I cannot adequately explain the extent of the incredible destruction in this county. However, the spirit of the residents was amazing.

Also, the success of our team was due mostly to the dedication and abilities of my three companions – Patti Quirk, Dawn Schellenberg and Dewey Potter, all city of Seattle public information officers. They were terrific!

UASI grants to five agencies

Five state agency projects have been approved for funding from the State Homeland Security Grant Program Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Grant.

The projects total \$2.3 million and focus on building target capabilities within the Seattle Urban Area that includes the city of Seattle, and King, Snohomish and Pierce counties.

These project recommendations were finalized in August by the Governor's Domestic Security Executive Group and were approved by the governor in September.

The projects are:

- Washington State Patrol ferry security, \$327,156. This project includes equipment and personnel to increase security for the Washington State Ferries System. It also funds a multi-agency tactical response exercise.
- Washington State Patrol Crime Laboratory, \$421,191. This project includes detection and analysis equipment for laboratories in Tacoma and Marysville.
- Washington State Department of Transportation, \$647,500. This project funds the development of homeland security plans and facility security for several Puget Sound area roads and bridges.



Jim Mullen, Washington Emergency Management Division director, makes a presentation to Barbara Thurman, EMD public education specialist, who retired Sept. 27 after 10 years of state service. More than 90 persons attended her retirement dinner at the Tacoma Elks Lodge. (EMD Photo by Rob Harper)

EMD staff recognition, awards

Mike Gordon, state training program manager since 2004, left EMD Oct. 31 for a position as emergency operations coordinator with Kitsap County. Gordon, a U.S. Navy veteran, first joined EMD in 1998 as a training program coordinator.

Lu An Johnson joined EMD in October as the public education program manager. She previously directed emergency management public education programs for the city of Seattle.

Christine Dill was appointed to the secretary administrative position in the Mitigation, Response and Recovery Unit in late October. She previously worked in the EMD's public assistance program at the Recovery Field Office in Olympia.

Klauss works in SW Louisiana area

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He said a Federal Emergency Management Agency advance team soon joined their effort so that in a day's time the parish had a resource tracking system that connected well with the state and federal emergency response efforts.

One of the biggest lessons from the Louisiana disaster deployment was the importance of communications, said Klauss. "All the communications were out (in Cameron parish). When that happens, there needs to be an answer" right at hand.

Klauss said another lesson learned was that in a major disaster many of the emergency response workers will not be available because they are working to protect and save their homes and families.

UASI grants to five agencies

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- University of Washington, \$746,160. This project includes the purchase of new communications equipment and systems, personal protective equipment, and facility security equipment.
- Washington Department of Health, \$226,000. This project includes the purchase of antibiotics and bio-hazard detection and analysis equipment.



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The Washington Emergency Management division, including the State Emergency Operations Center, is located in Building 20 on Camp Murray, located at exit 122 on Interstate 5 south of Tacoma, Washington.